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U.S. Government to Repair Malakal Road Using Local Graduates of U.S. Training Program

In Malakal, Upper Nile State, the United States Government is funding the repair of one of the city's worst roads, Dengreshofu-Hai Malakia, using a local contractor who recently completed state-of-the-art infrastructure improvement training. The latter was also provided by the U.S. Government. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), on behalf of the U.S. Government, awarded the repair contract to Sudanese Malakal-based engineering company Okuic for Engineering Ltd., whose efforts should finally make this difficult section of road passable for small vehicles during the rainy season.

Okuic employs more than 50 skilled and unskilled laborers – both women and men. The company has earned, on average, about \$8,200 per month over three months. Okuic won the award after taking part in the Capacity Building Program offered by the USAID-funded Sudan Infrastructure Services Project. The program trains local road maintenance contractors to handle community-identified activities that are a priority for local economic and social revitalization. Since the training began, six other participating companies across southern Sudan were awarded USAID contracts averaging in total \$24,000 a month.

The contractors are taught construction work and road maintenance according to Government of Southern Sudan regulations. Engineers and technicians from Southern Sudan's ten State Ministries of Physical Infrastructure are taught to do procurement, create minor works contracts, and project supervision – also according to national standards and procedures.

Thirteen more companies are in the second wave of training. At least two contractors from each of southern Sudan's ten states were selected. All had to be registered, have bank accounts, and have some level of previous experience. Most have small equipment such as pickup trucks, cement mixers, and hand tools.

One of Okuic's employees, Veronica Otwel, said the money she earns helps pay school fees for her five children, in addition to food: "This work helps me and my family."

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